Gonzalez Won't Convene Assassinations Committee

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Rep. Henry B. Gonzalez, D-Tex., has declined to call a meeting of the House Assassinations Committee for tomorrow, as requested by six of its members, saying he has resigned and has no power to do so.

Whether the other committee members will attempt to hold a rump session tomorrow to get on with committee business could not be determined.

The other members, at odds with Gonzalez for his attempt to fire Chief Counsel Richard A. Sprague, want to draw up a budget for the rest of the year. They also wish to adopt rules of procedure and make some arrangement for paying the 73 staff members.

Gonzalez said in a letter to Rep. Richardson Preyer, D-N.C., in response to his request for a committee meeting tomorrow, "You are, unfortunately, in the wrong forum. I am no longer chairman of the select committee, having resigned on March 1.

"THEREFORE, I am not empowered to call a meeting of the committee or perform any other function as a member of it."

Gonzalez, who is expected to return tonight from his Texas home where he has been in seclusion for two weeks, said agenda items for the proposed meeting include appointment of subcommittee chairmen and members. He told Preyer only the chairman, not the committee, is empowered to create subcommittees.

"If the select committee were to adopt rules providing for subcomittees," Gonzalez wrote, "this would clearly be an action in violation of the resolution creating the committee, and I am certain neither you nor your colleagues want to exceed the clear terms of the resolution establishing the select committee."

This exchange increased the confusion about the status of the committee that is authorized, until March 31, to investigate the murders of John F. Kennedy and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

SOME CAPITOL Hill sources say Gonzalez is chairman until the House votes to accept the resignation. Gonzalez' letter makes it clear that he no longer regards himself as chairman.

Veterans of House parliamentiary tangles say the rest of the committee probably can meet without permission or sanction of Gonzalez, but they doubt that anything but a near-miracle can save the committee from extinction by the end of this month.